

REMARKS

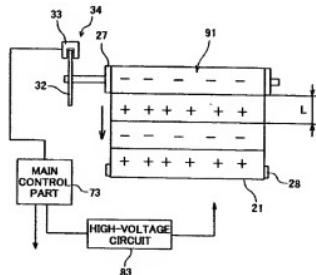
The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 19, 2008. Claims 1-20 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 14, 19 and 20 have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter. Accordingly, claims 1-20 remain pending upon entry of this amendment, with claims 1, 14, 19 and 20 being in independent form.

Claims 1-4, 11, 14-17 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as purportedly anticipated by Noguchi (JP 4-7236).

Applicant submits that independent claims 1, 14 and 20 of the present application are allowable over the cited art, for at least the reason that the cited art does not disclose or suggest the aspect of the present application of applying electric charges onto a surface of the endless conveyance belt in a belt-like alternate voltage pattern having alternate polarities. Each of independent claims 1, 14 and 20 addresses such aspect, as well as additional features.

As discussed in the application in paragraph [0070], "the conveyance belt is charged in a belt-like voltage pattern having alternating polarities[.]" or put a different way: "the conveyance belt is charged plus and minus alternatively[.]" This is clearly shown in Figure 6 of the present application, reproduced below:

FIG.6



Noguchi, as understood by applicant, proposes a sheet conveyer which utilizes an electrostatic pattern on the belt to hold and convey a sheet. The electrostatic pattern proposed by Noguchi is generated by the on-off controlling of a photoelectricity removal (erasing) means 21. In the approach proposed in Noguchi, the erasing means erases a part of a charge so as to change a charge width.

However, Noguchi does not disclose or suggest that the photoelectricity removal means 21 charges the belt in a belt-like alternate voltage pattern having alternating polarities.

Instead, the electrostatic pattern proposed by Noguchi consists of a region with charge followed by a region without charge. Such an electrostatic pattern consisting of a region with charge followed by a region without charge is *NOT* a belt-like alternate voltage pattern having alternating polarities.

Further, even if the apparatus is modified such that the erasing means is used to form a charge pattern including positively charged area and negatively charged area, the pattern would include neutral area (that is, neither positively charged nor negatively charged) in addition to positively charged area and negatively charged area. Such modified configuration would NOT apply electric charges onto a surface of the endless conveyance belt in a belt-like alternate voltage pattern *having alternate polarities*.

Applicant submits that the cited art, even when considered along with common sense and common knowledge to one skilled in the art, simply does *NOT* render unpatentable the above-mentioned aspect of the present application of applying electric charges onto a surface of the endless conveyance belt in a belt-like alternate voltage pattern *having alternate polarities*.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1, 14 and 20, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art.

In view of the remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that are required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

Date. December 9, 2008



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